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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Internet Distributor of Pirated Software Pleads Guilty to Criminal Copyright Infringement**

Michael J. Battle, United States Attorney for the Western District of New York announced that Stephen Ryan Wiedmaier, age 23, of 4 Kimberly Court, Warren, Pennsylvania, waived formal Indictment and pled guilty today before the Honorable Charles J. Siragusa, United States District Judge in the Western District of New York, to a single felony count Information charging him with criminal copyright infringement in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2319(b)(1) and Title 17, United States Code, Section 506(a)(1).

According to documents filed in Federal court, Wiedmaier was a participant in the “warez scene” – an underground online community that consists of individuals and organized groups who use the Internet to engage in the large-scale, illegal distribution of copyright protected software. In the warez scene, certain participants (known as “suppliers”) are able to obtain access to copyrighted software, video games, DVD movies, and MP3 music files, often before those titles are available to the general public. Other participants (known as “crackers”) then use their technical skills to circumvent or “crack” the digital copyright protections. Others (known as “couriers”) distribute the pirated software to various file servers on the Internet for others to access, reproduce, and further distribute.

In pleading guilty, Wiedmaier admitted that he was a member of several warez groups and was responsible for the development and operation a warez group called "Fusion." "Fusion" provided access to hundreds of copies of pirated software including movies, games, music and software utility programs. Wiedmaier operated the "Fusion" warez server from his campus apartment at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Henrietta, New York. In addition, Wiedmaier assisted several other warez groups by providing computer space and "cracking tools" which were used to illegally circumvent software manufacturers' copyright protection devices.

Wiedmaier faces a possible punishment of up to five years' imprisonment, three years' supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000 and is scheduled to be sentenced before Judge Siragusa on September 28, 2004 at 2:30 p.m.

This case arose from the federal investigation known as Operation Buccaneer, a fourteen month investigation led by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Justice Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section, which culminated in the execution of more than 70 searches worldwide in December 2001. To date, Operation Buccaneer has resulted in the conviction of 27 individuals in the United States for violation of federal copyright laws, as well as the conviction of 8 individuals in the United Kingdom and Finland.

The investigation of Stephen Ryan Wiedmaier was conducted by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney's Tiffany Lee and Richard Resnick from the Western District of New York and Clement J. McGovern from the Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section of the Department of Justice.

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